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The success of English loans in IT terminology in Belgian Dutch and Netherlandic Dutch

This paper sets out to empirically test variation in the success rates of English loanwords in the two main varieties of Dutch, Belgian Dutch and Netherlandic Dutch. Crucially, we adopt a usage-based onomasiological perspective, taking the concept expressed by the loanword as starting point. This allows us to overcome a number of methodological issues present in existing loanword research (such as topic specificity; Zenner & Kristiansen 2013). Specifically, we calculate the relative preference for the loanword vis-à-vis alternative lexicalisations for a given concept (Zenner et al. 2012). For the concept *bijlage* ‘attachment’ in Table 1, this means that the English loanword *attachment* is chosen approximately one out of two times in both the Netherlands (48%) and in Dutch-speaking Belgium (56%).

<i>bijlage</i>	Neth.Dutch	%	Belg.Dutch	%
<i>attachment</i>	34	48	83	56
<i>bijlage</i>	29	41	54	37
<i>bijvoegsel</i>	8	11	10	7

Table 1 - Lexicalisation preferences for *bijlage* in quality newspapers

Our analysis zooms in on differences in success rates for English loanwords in both varieties of Dutch and in different registers. Recent research on the use of English for person reference nouns (Zenner et al. 2012: 780) and in job ads and job ad titles (Zenner et al. 2013: 1050) has shown that in comparison to other lexical fields, the domain of IT is typically very “successful” in this respect, i.e. most English terms occur in this field. Focusing on several variables, such as length of the variant, concept frequency, age of the borrowed item, necessity of the loan (i.e. filling a lexical gap), we try to map out possible factors determining the success of 20 key concepts from within the IT domain. As such, the profile-based method (cf. Table 1), introduced in cognitive-linguistic

lexicology in Geeraerts, Grondelaers and Speelman (1999), is applied to a multi-layered dataset of over one billion words.

References

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